DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 367 UD 033 335

TITLE	Building Capacity for School Renewal: Principles of the Alliance for Achievement Model.
INSTITUTION	MDC, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC.
PUB DATE	1997-04-00
NOTE	111p.
AVAILABLE FROM	MDC, P.O. Box 17268, Chapel Hill, NC 27516-7268. Tel: 919-968-4531; Fax: 919-929-8557; Web site: http://www.mdcinc.org.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Change Strategies; College Bound Students; *College Preparation; College School Cooperation; Community Colleges; Cooperative Planning; Data Collection; *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; High Schools; Leadership; Middle Schools; Program Development; Public Education; School Community Relationship; Teamwork; Two Year colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*School Renewal

ABSTRACT

MDC, Inc.'s Alliance for Achievement was a 4-year school change demonstration aimed at encouraging more students to continue their education beyond high school by linking middle schools, high schools, and community colleges into a unified continuum. Implemented in six southern communities, it focused on increasing minority and low-income student enrollment in high-level high school courses; ensuring that secondary students develop a clear understanding of the connections between school, college, and career; and forging collaborative ties among schools, community colleges, and local businesses to promote the first two objectives. This report describes nine premises that MDC considers fundamental to successful capacity building: develop teams to work with all levels of the system; develop strong team skills; provide an empowering paradigm; focus on critical values and their implication for action; link diagnosis, planning, and implementation; equip people with survival skills; build in tangible incentives for change; dignify the learning process; and offer technical support during implementation. The paper also examines MDC's Moving from Vision to Action planning process and the Alliance for Achievement Data Collection Guide used by demonstration sites. The Moving from Vision to Action Planning Guide and the Data Collection Guide are appended. (SM)

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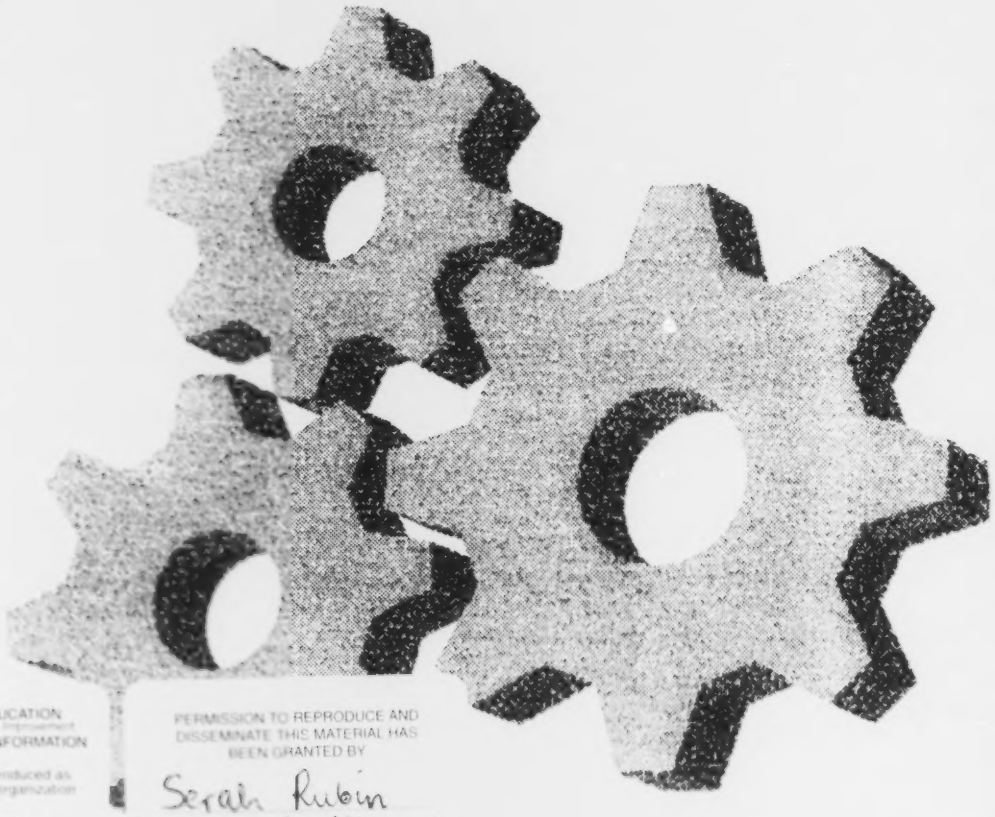
ALLIANCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL RENEWAL



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MDC

PRINCIPLES OF THE ALLIANCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT MODEL

MDC works to expand the economy, develop the workforce, and increase per capita income in communities across the country, with a special focus on the South. Established in 1967 to help North Carolina make the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and from a segregated to an integrated workforce, MDC has spent the last 30 years publishing research and developing programs to strengthen the workforce, foster economic development, and remove the barriers between people and jobs. Since its 1988 publication of *America's Shame, America's Hope*, a study of how the educational reform movement failed at-risk youth, MDC has launched several projects to assistant middle schools, high schools, and community colleges with the strategic planning, leadership development, and capacity building they need to increase educational and career options for low-income and minority youth.

The Alliance for Achievement set out in 1992 on a four-year quest to raise the academic achievement, college-going rate, and career opportunities of low-income and minority students in economically distressed communities throughout the South. Funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and BellSouth Foundation, the Alliance launched collaborative "school-to-college-and-career" initiatives in six communities, managed by teams from local middle schools, high schools, and community colleges. Over the life of the project, team members helped forge partnerships among schools and employers on behalf of four objectives: more rigorous curricula, better career education, more parental involvement, and more effective academic and career guidance. The funding of the Alliance program ended in late 1996, but the Alliance-inspired teams and initiatives continue.

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Building Capacity for School Renewal:

Principles of the Alliance for Achievement Model

MDC Inc.
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 1997

Introduction

The Alliance for Achievement was a four-year school change demonstration aimed at encouraging more students to continue their education beyond high school by linking middle schools, high schools, and community colleges into a unified continuum. It sought to develop a culture of collaboration among educators and guide all students toward academic success, postsecondary education, and rewarding careers. MDC developed the Alliance to test ways of better preparing the future workforce and increasing opportunity for young people.

Implemented in six communities in the South, the Alliance was designed to generate model programmatic strategies to:

1. Increase the enrollment of minority and low-income middle and high school students in high-level courses and raise their college-going rate;

2. Ensure that all middle and high school students develop a clear understanding of the connections among school, college, and career; and

3. Forge collaborative ties among middle school, high schools, community colleges, and local businesses to promote the first two objectives.

While it helped educators take practical steps toward school reform, the Alliance sought also to build a core group of practitioners devoted to shared values -- equity and excellence, aspirations and access -- that could become the foundation for a "culture of high educational expectations" for all students in each participating community.

The Alliance was structured on the premise that community colleges should be an essential partner with middle schools and high schools in a coordinated system to promote postsecondary attainment. A primary goal was to make young people, as well as their teachers, counselors, and parents, more aware that community colleges teach the intellectual and technical skills required by the emerging economy.

MDC designed the Alliance following principles of organizational and community renewal field tested over the last decade in a variety of our other school and community change initiatives. The philosophy and practice of leadership development described herein are used by MDC to create broad-thinking leaders to drive school reform and institutional collaboration at test sites. This paper notes nine grounding premises MDC believes are fundamental to successful capacity building and provides an overview of MDC's "Moving from Vision to Action" planning process and the Alliance for Achievement Data Collection Guide used by demonstration sites. Three other publications report on the outcomes of the Alliance and on the techniques used to increase achievement and college enrollment (see list of publications at the end of this paper).

Building Communities of Conscience and Conviction*

How do citizens achieve the capacity, the confidence, and the motivation to wrestle with the fundamental issues that affect their communities? Is there a way to jump-start leadership that will bring about civic and institutional renewal? How do citizens create communities of conscience and conviction that embody their better instincts?

For nearly a decade, MDC has been experimenting with pragmatic responses to these questions, helping people learn how to renew their communities and their schools. While MDC's projects do not show up in a scan of leadership development programs or experiments in building social capital, we draw on these traditions and we share the belief that motivated people in trusting relationships are the lifeblood of the community, whether that community is a school, a neighborhood, a county, or a state. Over a decade of experimentation, MDC has refined a variety of tools for constructing vigorous and creative communities and for developing pools of principled, broad-thinking leaders who can be catalysts for community change. Our experience has led us to several principles and practices that we sought to embed in the Alliance for Achievement school reform initiative.

Principles

In pursuing our mission to "expand the economy and develop the workforce," MDC works at many levels and in a wide range of settings. The issues that we address, however, have a more limited scope, reflecting MDC's mission of helping people reform and redesign approaches to workforce and economic development and education. Our work is shaped by our commitment to four core values:

Equity: MDC's roots, in the South of the 1960s, have developed in us a deep belief in the importance of unrestricted opportunity for all. Today, as the information economy increases the demand on human skill as the source of added value, the economic argument for investing in all people is converging with the moral argument that all citizens of a democracy merit an equal opportunity to progress.

Excellence: In many communities in the South, years of exclusion and isolation have meant that low expectations are part of the culture. Survival in today's competitive world, however, demands that all communities set and reach higher standards. We believe that opportunities unfold and the community flourishes when all people are able to think well, collaborate well, and produce well.

Inclusion: MDC's goal is to make room for more people at the table without compromising the quality of the meal. We challenge communities to abandon the belief

* This section draws from MDC's *Building Communities of Conscience and Conviction: Lessons from Recent Experience* written for the Lilly Endowment, 1997.

that moving toward equity will threaten the greater opportunities that some currently enjoy: rather, inclusion requires seeking the highest common denominator.

A belief in human capacity: People have a capacity to transform their institutions and communities in congruence with the values of equity, excellence, and inclusion. MDC seeks to sharpen the capacity to plan and implement reforms that result in tangible improvements in human opportunity.

MDC began its work in organizational and community change in the late 1980s, with a rural leadership program on the coast of South Carolina. By 1992, a version of this program had been codified into a trainers' guide and was being used from West Virginia to Oregon.

Practice

Late in 1990, MDC began a series of multi-year projects aimed at fostering systemic reform in schools and in workforce training institutions, drawing on the methods of leadership development and organizational change that had proven effective in the community context. While the basic values that underlie our efforts at change have been constant, MDC's institutional role has been as varied as our partners and our projects. But whatever the application, we follow a sequence of steps over a number of years to plan and execute a project:

Design: The design phase involves three tasks. First, MDC staff develop a "conceptual framework," which is a policy paper that guides the project and stimulates the project teams' creativity. Second, we design the structure of the project, arranging elements such as training sessions, technical assistance, and structured implementation in accordance with the project's goals, funding, and duration. Finally, we design training activities, intended to help participants build skills in analysis, vision development, planning, implementation, and evaluation. These activities are grounded in principles of adult learning, with the trainers and the participants teaching to and learning from each other.

Participant recruitment and selection: Participant recruitment and selection occur simultaneously with design. MDC selects sites and team members through a competitive application process which includes a written application and a site visit to the most promising applicants.

Training for group formation, issue analysis, and planning: Each of MDC's projects begins with a residential training session, lasting between three and five days. This initial session is followed by a sequence of shorter, follow-up residential sessions. MDC teaches participants to use data to diagnose the system that needs changing, through the filter of the conceptual framework. Teams then develop a vision for the future, test it for feasibility against their previous analysis of current conditions, and plan how to bring the vision about. Finally, team members develop a process to implement, evaluate, and

revisit the plan, with an eye toward keeping the plan fresh and adjusting it to changing circumstances.

Implementation: Training and planning are directly linked to implementation. Once teams are past the planning stage, much of MDC's training and technical assistance focuses on helping teams identify and win over those who are able to assist or block progress.

Evaluation: Data-driven evaluation flows naturally from data-driven analysis and planning. In all our training sessions, MDC helps teams learn how to measure progress toward their goals, and shows the value of continual self-assessment.

Lessons to Incorporate

Four important lessons have emerged from MDC's decade of work in community and organizational change. The first is that there are three dimensions of awareness that must all be affected before change can happen:

- people must first see that change is required,
- then understand the role they play in the system that needs changing and the importance of changing their own behavior, and finally
- come to believe that their actions can make a difference.

The second lesson is that a network of peers, all engaged in an analysis of goals and current practices, is crucial to sustainable change.

The third lesson MDC has learned is that teams must come to believe that the answers to their problems lie within them, rather than in an outside source of authority. We encourage self-assessment and self-criticism that will lead to people believing in their power to construct solutions to the challenges they face.

The fourth lesson is that the deep reforms we seek do not happen quickly, and significant changes may not even occur during the project's time frame. Often, the preliminary steps to lay a foundation for change will take two or three years.

Grounding Premises

In the Alliance and other change initiatives, MDC applied nine operating premises we believe are fundamental to successful capacity building. These nine premises are as follows:

One: Develop teams to work with all levels of the system. Each of MDC's projects uses a team-based approach for leading change. Our work is premised on the belief that change can be fostered by working initially with a core group of people representative of the system with which we are concerned. Each team includes people

who have the power to lead or block change, as well as grassroots leaders who have earned the trust of the community. We try to assemble a team that will reflect the diversity of perspectives and attitudes present in the system we are trying to change.

Two: Develop strong team skills. We make sure that people in our projects achieve measurable, specific goals, but we also hope to leave behind stronger commitments, shared ideas, and relationships which equip communities to do business differently in the future. Team members develop a personal model of leadership, agree on norms for creating a learning community among the group, and build relationships through an analysis and synthesis of personality types.

MDC also assists teams in developing communications skills among themselves, and in learning to facilitate discussions. In virtually every project, race is a factor in the communities involved and in the makeup of the teams. MDC often initiates conversations that are explicitly about race through a discussion of the history of the community. This discussion can clear the air of latent tension, prepare the teams to confront racial disparities in their communities or schools, and lay the groundwork for trust and understanding.

Three: Provide an empowering paradigm. Before people can approach complex problems, they must often learn to look at their communities differently. MDC uses a variety of methods to help team members break free of the ways they are accustomed to seeing themselves and their institutions. The first is the conceptual framework or essay, a short paper written by MDC that participants read and discuss at the outset of every project. The paper presents complex issues in accessible terms and illustrates both the practical and the moral consequences of inaction, thus alerting teams to the need for change and encouraging them to challenge the status quo. The essays provide broad suggestions, but never direct prescriptions, for addressing the gap between the project's core values and the current situation that prevails in schools or communities.

The conceptual framework is supported by inspirational speakers (both theorists and practitioners) who provide authoritative insights; field trips which illustrate exemplary practices against the backdrop of real-world struggles; and the presentation of best practices through panels, workshops, and case studies. Our object is to encourage participants to treat these other models as sources of inspiration, rather than as ready-made solutions.

Four: Focus on critical values and their implications for action. MDC's approach to change relies on leading participants to recognize the conflicts between "what is" and "what should be" in their communities. For this to happen, people must become clear about what matters most to them, and they must look at what happens around them as these events relate to their values. MDC often helps to sharpen this recognition through a reflection over community and personal history, evoking powerful memories and motivating a desire to work toward a better future. This exercise is followed by a data analysis, which shows what must change, often in sharp contrast to the teams'

imagined future or even their convictions about the present state. MDC strives to create a learning environment where people can respond to the voice of conscience in safety, at their own pace.

Five: Link diagnosis, planning, and implementation. After values are distilled, a plan rooted in these values must be developed and implemented. MDC calls this process "Moving from Vision to Action" -- a defined process which provides a structure for planning. Steps are introduced sequentially, but teams are encouraged to view planning as an iterative process.

The Moving from Vision to Action model begins with an analysis of the current state, reflecting on the conflicts between values and reality described above. Teams then prioritize challenges through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses within a system and opportunities and threats that are beyond their control. The data gathered in this process help to craft an overarching vision and specific goals for the future.

After teams determine what they want to achieve, they focus on how to achieve it through strategy development. Teams examine the political, systemic, economic, and personal realities of their communities. They then research strategies that other communities have used to address similar problems and select those that seem the most promising. Before implementation, an analysis of the likely positions of major stakeholders in the status quo alerts people to possible challengers or allies.

Finally, action planning requires that sites clarify who will do what and when, encouraging commitment and accountability. Evaluation planning happens over the course of a year, as groups clarify their goals and set quantifiable benchmarks.

The Moving from Vision to Action process results in the core of a proposal that triggers implementation funding, usually from the foundation that sponsors the MDC-led project. But more importantly, the discussions teams have about their values and vision lay the foundation for future team-based efforts.

Six: Equip people with survival skills. During the implementation process, teams come face-to-face with the often-difficult politics of change. MDC customizes training and technical assistance to the issues that teams are facing as they occur, but there are several ways in which we help people prepare in advance for the challenges that lie ahead. One is by encouraging teams to "widen the circle," or to seek the involvement of larger numbers of key players in the reform process. Another is by helping teams and the institutions they represent address the anxiety that results from the change process. We use management theory as well as our own experience in helping teams identify and confront potentially destructive resistance to the vision of reform that emerges from the planning process. Finally, MDC creates an opportunity to defuse burnout by discussion of difficult issues among teams, with teams advising each other on the difficult issues they have tackled.

Seven: Build in tangible incentives for change. In every project, MDC faces the difficulty of involving people in the change effort and keeping them involved throughout the process. We have learned that many factors help sustain participation, including training sessions that expand people's horizons and build their skills; a safe and welcoming learning environment, and implementation grants that provide an incentive to stay with the project as well as psychological reinforcement of the importance of the work.

Eight: Dignify the learning process. In helping people to become creative problem solvers, MDC works to create an environment that encourages reflection and discovery. Our sessions focus on small groups that allow each team to find its own voice, working within a structure that has been outlined by MDC in advance. Teams have the security of knowing how each step will prepare for the next one, and understanding the historical and practical consequence of new material. We also allow teams the time for dry runs of their newly acquired process skills, and debrief simulations on both process and content.

Where possible, MDC uses alumni of previous cycles of the program to share their experiences with program strategies and the politics of change. Their experiences with the same issues that current participants are facing gives them a moral authority that no outside expert could invoke.

The sequencing of events also contributes to people's comfort levels. We begin with simple tasks that give learners a sense of safety and assurance, which they take with them to the harder tasks that lie ahead. Often, early exercises encourage reflection and dialogue rather than cognitive knowledge, and therefore place team members on an equal footing.

Finally, MDC resists telling people how to solve their problems, responding to appeals for answers with more questions to solicit the team's own opinions and priorities. While we provide non-negotiables -- the core values and planning process described above -- we expect teams to fit these tools to their own circumstances and to develop solutions based on their own insights and creativity.

Nine: Offer technical support during implementation. MDC takes an active role with the people in its projects, walking them down the path to change. The technical assistance we provide involves many elements: staff as process coaches, helping teams to work together smoothly; staff as program experts and brokers, connecting teams to experts in the field who can provide more detailed assistance; and staff as troubleshooters, serving as a sounding board for strategy development, readers of draft proposals, and the voice of reason when team dynamics go awry. MDC also offers indirect technical assistance by modeling effective teamwork and good group process during training sessions.

Table 1
Phase of Work and Key Activities in a Typical MDC Change Process

	PLANNING PHASE		IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
VISION TO ACTION PLANNING	DIAGNOSIS AND DISCOVERY	VISION AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT	STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION
	• Articulate key values • Conduct data-based analysis of the current situation • Discuss dissonance between key values and current state	• Define ideal future state • Set measurable goals • Develop and select strategies • Develop action plan and evaluation plan	• Execute strategies • Evaluate results • Refine strategies in light of evaluation
LEADERSHIP AND GROUP BUILDING	FORM AND DEVELOP THE CORE LEADERSHIP TEAM • Trust building activities • Meyers-Briggs • Self-monitoring and evaluation of team performance	FORM AND DEVELOP THE CORE LEADERSHIP TEAM • Trust building activities • Expand core team/widen the circle of allies	SOLIDIFY AND EXPAND THE CORE LEADERSHIP TEAM • Recruit allies • Manage resistance to change: negotiate institutional and community politics
DEVELOP-MENT OF CONCEPTUAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE	• Discuss implications of conceptual framework	• Discuss implications of conceptual framework • Learn about "best practices" in the field • Visit exemplary programs and model communities	• Apply conceptual framework and strategies based on "best practices" • Reflect on strengths and weaknesses of strategies • Modify conceptual framework and strategies based on experience

Table 1, continued

MDC ROLES	TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO TEAMS	TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO TEAMS	TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO TEAMS
	• Self-monitoring and evaluation of team performance • Modeling • Designing and leading training sessions • Training and coaching in techniques of effective teamwork • Act as "conscience" to reinforce norms established by the group • Telephone and on-site consultation	• Trust-building activities • Training and coaching in techniques of effective teamwork • Working with diversity • Telephone and on-site consultation • Act as "conscience" to reinforce norms established by the group • Site visits to exemplary programs and model communities	• Telephone and on-site consultation • periodic reconvening of teams for skill building, exposure to best practices, and personal renewal • Act as "conscience" to reinforce norms established by the group • Group celebrations and cultural sharings • Manage resistance to change; negotiate institutional and community politics

Application in the Alliance Demonstration

The Alliance for Achievement followed each of these principles of practice.

- In the summer of 1992, 36 schools and colleges were invited to submit competitive applications; 21 proposals were received and 11 semi-finalists were visited; ultimately 6 sites were selected by a project advisory panel.

- *Walking the Talk: Increasing Educational Options for Southern Youth* was the conceptual framework for the Alliance for Achievement. It promoted the creation of a "seamless path" to guide students from middle school through high school to postsecondary education and the workforce and synthesized current thinking about ways to raise student aspirations and expand career opportunities. It described the fundamental elements required for successful partnerships among middle schools, high schools, community colleges,

families, and communities. And, finally, it described many programs across the country that raise students' aspirations and academic achievement.

- A critical feature of the Alliance project was using teams to lead the change process. Each site assembled a team of five or six members including teachers, counselors, and administrators from at least one middle school, a feeder high school, and a nearby community college. For many participants, this was a new experience: working together to take responsibility for the continuum of education, not just their own slice of it. Over time, the core teams expanded to add community and business leaders and more educators who together shaped the Alliance's evolution.

- The core teams participated in a series of leadership training seminars to guide them in developing plans for linking schools and the community college. MDC convened six training institutes over the course of the four-year Alliance demonstration. One held in New York enabled teams to visit more than a dozen model schools in the area. Other institutes featured experts such as Kati Haycock from The Education Trust, Robert Templin from the Virginia Community College System, and Asa Hilliard of the Georgia State University, all of whom inspired the teams to adopt the principals of equity, excellence, and inclusion and provided concrete examples of strategies that could transform school culture and practice.

- Alliance teams received training in the use of "Moving from Vision to Action" and conducted a comprehensive data collection and analysis practicum that provided baseline data on student performance and behavior. The teams identified conditions in their schools and colleges that inhibited collaboration and a culture of academic excellence. They developed a five-year vision for change, generated programmatic strategies to advance the vision, and fashioned action and evaluation plans. To carry out the plans, each site received a grant of $25,000 and some sites received additional mini-grants to strengthen connections with local employers.

- Alliance Teams had eight months to develop a plan of action. During that time MDC conducted two leadership planning institutes and made two on-site visits to each participating team. Participation in the Alliance required each team to analyze current school performance and to set challenging goals for change in the following four areas:

  ⇒ curriculum enhancement;
  ⇒ parental involvement
  ⇒ guidance and counseling; and
  ⇒ career awareness.

Based on local circumstances, the teams determined which of these components to emphasize. The teams adopted practices that had proven successful in other schools around the country and they invented new solutions based on their collective wisdom.

- Technical assistance continued throughout the demonstration during periodic visits by MDC staff and other consultants. Staff became coaches, trouble shooters, brokers of other consultative help, and sounding boards for the sites. Each visit included time for team reflection on progress toward goals and development of the team. Individualized assistance was also offered during the several leadership seminars.

- The final convening of teams in 1995 was an opportunity for sites to report on their successes and remaining challenges; final evaluative reports were prepared for each site measuring progress toward its goals.

Thus, the Alliance for Achievement was not simply about a process of collaboration and cooperation among teachers and administrators. It was about change: change in the priorities and practices of schools, change among educators, and change in the aspirations of students.

"Moving from Vision to Action"

The planning guide used by Alliance for Achievement teams can be found in Appendix A. "Moving from Vision to Action" is a step-by-step planning process for community and institutional change. It helped the Alliance teams organize their work and make informed decisions based on facts rather than suspicions, hunches, or unexamined beliefs.

The Moving from Vision to Action process has nine steps that may or may not be followed in rigid sequence (see Table 2). The process is both data-driven and vision-driven. The first two steps clarify the current situation teams wish to change. Teams use data collection and analysis to highlight institutional strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats that will influence the school-community college collaboration and programmatic reforms.

After describing the current situation, teams look to the future, again using a two-stage process. Teams create a vision that describes how the school will look when the change process is complete and the vision becomes the "image of success" toward which the change process is directed. Next, the process "unpacks" the vision by creating measurable goals -- specific targets to be attained over three to five years, in order for the vision to be realized.

Table 2
Moving from Vision to Action:
A Summary

STEP	PURPOSE	KEY QUESTION
1. Collect and Analyze Data	Understand the current situation.	Where are our strengths, weaknesses, assets, and liabilities?
2. Describe the Current Situation	Prioritize key issues/challenges.	What needs to change?
3. Create a Vision	Depict the ideal future.	What should be the results of our efforts?
4. Set goals	Define the ideal future situation.	What specific outcomes do we want to achieve?
5. Develop strategies	Determine programmatic actions that will produce the desired future.	What approach will we take to reach those outcomes?
6. Analyze Stakeholders Influence	Determine who needs to be involved.	What political/institutional factors should we consider?
7. Plan for Funding and Sustainability	Set out ideas for how to ensure long-term sustainability.	How will we pay for our strategies -- short-term and long-term?
8. Plan for Action	Define implementation responsibilities.	Who will do what, when?
9 Plan an Evaluation	Define benchmarks to measure progress and approach to measurement.	How will we know when we have achieved our goals?

After defining what the team wishes to accomplish, the process turns to questions of how it will accomplish these goals. The process of strategy development includes an analysis of institutional and political factors working for and against change and research on model strategies from around the region and country. A stakeholders analysis assures that all parties with a vested interest in the vision will be brought into the implementation process, and a plan for short- and long-term survival of results is mapped by a funding and sustainability plan. Finally, an action plan and an evaluation plan are developed to describe who will do what when, and to assess progress toward the goals and vision.

Data Collection Guide

A modified and updated version of the Data Collection Guide used by Alliance teams can be found in Appendix B. During the process of describing the current state that teams wanted to change, Alliance sites used the guide to collect and analyze student achievement and performance data from each of the collaborating institutions.

The data guide helps teams identify students who are not being exposed to a rich set of educational options and who are therefore not being prepared for either college or careers. By desegregating data by race and sex and, when possible, by income, teams can see more clearly how their schools are benefiting some, but not all students. The process of collecting and interpreting the data often becomes a turning point in a team's development and work. It exposes practices and policies that have heretofore been followed without evaluation through the lens of equity and excellence.

The data guide serves a second purpose. It enables teams to establish benchmarks to measure their progress toward enrollment and performance goals. At the end of the demonstration period, the data guide serves as one instrument for assessing each site's accomplishments.

The revised version of the guide focuses on data that Alliance sites found the most helpful in developing a clear picture of what was happening in their schools. Some sites went beyond this analysis and benefited from developing an even deeper understanding of how practice and policy were limiting options and opportunities for certain students. Both the Data Guide and the Moving from Vision to Action Planning Guide can be effective tools in other school renewal initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities and options for all students.

Afterword

This paper has described the philosophy and practice of leadership development used by MDC to create broad-thinking leaders to drive school reform. Three additional publications emerging from the Alliance project provide deeper analysis of important aspects of the Alliance model. These include:

- ***Walking the Talk: Increasing Educational Options for Southern Youth*** -- promotes the creation of a "seamless path" to guide students from middle school through high school to postsecondary education and the workforce. The report synthesizes current thinking about ways to raise student aspirations and expand career opportunities. It describes the fundamental elements required for successful partnerships among middle schools, high schools, community colleges, families, and communities. *Walking the Talk* also describes many programs across the country that raise students' aspirations and academic achievement.

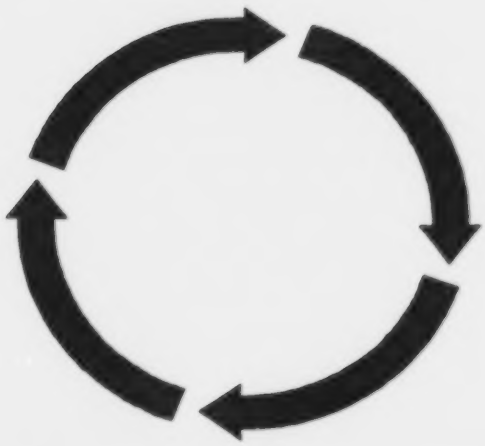
- ***I Would Have Taught You Differently: Bringing an Understanding of the Economy Into the Schools*** -- describes partnerships among middle schools, high schools, and employers, aimed at raising students' and teachers' awareness of the job market and career opportunities. The report contains a strong rationale for building alliances between schools and employers and features programmatic models of workplace and classroom learning experiences for teachers and students. It also includes case studies that describe the formation and development of three different school-employer partnerships.

- ***Preparing Every Child for College and Career*** -- provides an overview of the issues the Alliance demonstration sought to address and reports on local and regional outcomes. This journalistic description of the Alliance experience captures lessons learned about organizing and carrying out comprehensive school change initiatives, including an assessment of the pivotal role community colleges can play in raising student aspirations and career awareness. It reports on hurdles Alliance sites had to jump and challenges likely to face other sites committed to instituting a culture of excellence and equity.

These publications are available from MDC, Inc. Also available is a videotape titled, ***Alliance for Achievement: Preparing Every Child for College and Career***.

Moving from Vision to Action:

A Planning Guide for the Alliance for Achievement



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INTRODUCTION

Vision to Action is a step-by-step planning process for community and institutional change. The process has been used by groups as diverse as educators, boards of directors of community-based organizations, and volunteers involved in regional strategic planning efforts.

The process has nine steps. We have laid them out in a sequence that has worked for other groups. But the sequence is not sacred. You can, to some extent, switch the order. You can skip steps, and you can (and probably will) come back and redo earlier steps.

The *Vision to Action* process is both data-driven and vision-driven. It begins with two steps designed to clarify the current situation we wish to change: data collection and analysis -- to define your school's current strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats; and determining the current situation to prioritize the most important challenges requiring attention.

After describing the current situation, you look to the future, again using a two-stage process. First, a vision that is created to describe how the school will look when the change process has been implemented, and the vision becomes the "image of success" toward which the change process is directed. Next, the process "unpacks" the vision by creating measurable goals, specific targets to be attained over the next three to five years, in order for the vision to be realized.

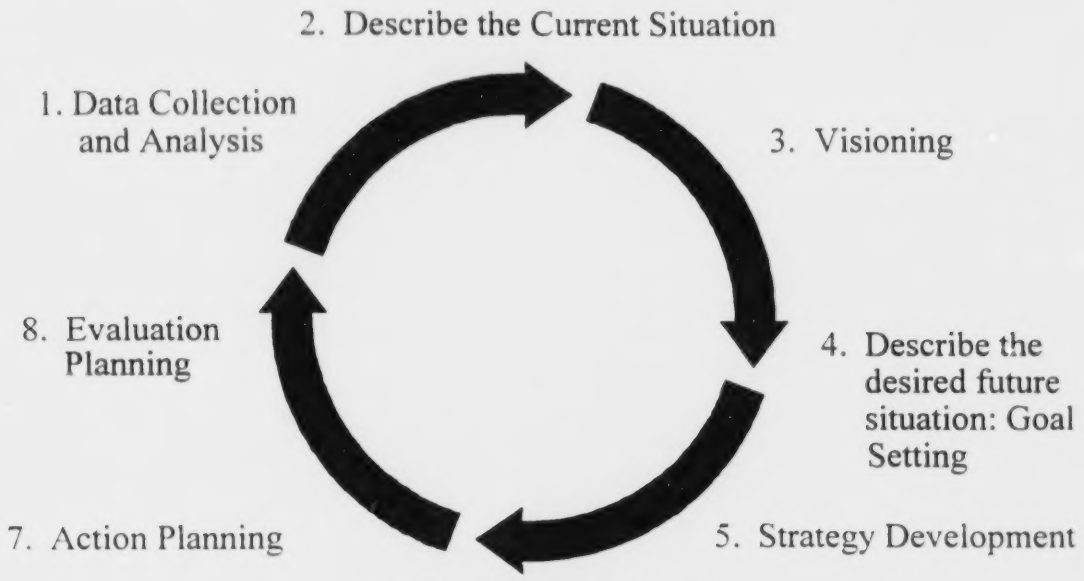
After defining goals -- what you wish to achieve -- the process turns to questions of how, through strategy development. The process of developing strategies requires analysis of institutional and political factors working for and against change through a "force-field analysis", and research on model strategies from around the region and country. A stakeholders analysis ensures that all parties with a vested interest in the vision will be brought into the implementation process. To plan for short- and long-term survival of the results of the Vision to Action process, a funding and sustainability plan is the next step.

Finally, an action plan and an evaluation plan are developed to describe who will do what when, and to assess progress toward the goals and vision.

Figure 1 provides an overview of each step of the process, its purpose, and the key question addressed through each step.

Figure 1

MOVING FROM VISION TO ACTION


2. Describe the Current Situation
1. Data Collection and Analysis
3. Visioning
8. Evaluation Planning
4. Describe the desired future situation: Goal Setting
7. Action Planning
5. Strategy Development
6. Stakeholders Analysis

Note that these steps are laid out in this guide in a rational, linear fashion. But life is not rational or linear. The planning process should be seen as flexible: you should go back and forth between steps as needed. It should also be seen as cyclical. Ideally, planning will be institutionalized in your school so that you revisit your vision and goals after a few years and determine what additional strategies should be undertaken.

Figure 2

MOVING FROM VISION TO ACTION:
A SUMMARY

STEP	PURPOSE	KEY QUESTION
1. Collect and Analyze Data	Understand the current situation.	Where are our strengths, weaknesses, assets, and liabilities?
2. Describe the Current Situation	Prioritize key issues/challenges.	What needs to change?
3. Create a Vision	Depict the ideal future.	What should be the results of our efforts?
4. Set Goals	Define the ideal future situation.	What specific outcomes do we want to achieve?
5. Develop Strategies	Determine programmatic actions that will produce the desired future.	What approach will we take to reach those outcomes?
6. Analyze Stakeholders Influence	Determine who needs to be involved.	What political/ institutional factors should we consider?
7. Plan for Funding and Sustainability	Set out ideas for how to ensure long-term sustainability	How will we pay for our strategies -- short-term and long-term?
8. Plan for Action	Define implementation responsibilities.	Who will do what, when?
9. Plan an Evaluation	Define benchmarks to measure progress and approach to measurement.	How will we know when we have achieved our goals?

Finally, some problems cannot or should not wait. When critical issues are identified and can be addressed fairly simply and quickly, there is no need to wait until the planning process is complete before addressing them. But make sure that you do not get off track in the planning process by initiating new efforts along the way.

STEP 1: COLLECT DATA
ANALYZE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT)

The *Vision to Action* process starts with gathering and analyzing data about your school. This step answers the question: where are we now?

Why:

- ✓ The process of data collection and analysis ensures that goals and action plans are rooted in a clear understanding of the realities of the current situation.

- ✓ Understanding how to use data to tell a story or make a point is empowering for groups and provides the rationale for strategies -- important later as you go into the community to "sell" your ideas.

- ✓ The process offers a vehicle to gain clarity about issues you can control (internal strengths and weaknesses) and issues you must be aware of because of their potential impact on the school (opportunities and threats).

How:

The data collection and analysis process has two phases: (1) data collection; and (2) analysis.

<u>Phase 1: Data Collection</u>

→ Your first task will be to gather quantitative and qualitative data about current conditions in the school. You can use a variety of sources to gather data: school-level and district-level numerical data, surveys of students and faculty, and the results of focus groups.

Phase 2: Analysis

→ Next analyze your data, answering the questions that appear on your data analysis sheets. Ensure that when you meet to analyze data, people come prepared, having absorbed the essential content of the data collected. Also, consider who you want to have as part of the discussion of data analysis. You may want to consider including outside resource people who could look objectively at your data and help you interpret it.

Using the Step 1 Worksheets, organize your findings using a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) framework:

1. What are the strengths -- *internal* to the school -- that we can build on (e.g. new energetic administrators, increases in reading and math scores)?

2. What are the weaknesses -- *internal* to the school -- that we must overcome (e.g. high student dropout rate, large percent of students failing key classes)?

3. What are the opportunities related to student achievement that are external (i.e. we don't have control over) to the school of which we ought to take advantage (e.g. new local or state policies, support from the business community)?

4. What are the threats related to student achievement that are external to the school of which we must be aware of and from which we must try to avoid a negative impact (e.g. new local or state policies, changes in administrative positions)?

Add to the SWOT analysis from your own knowledge that may not appear in the data gathered.

→ Determine what, if any, additional data are needed to buttress assertions on the SWOT analysis. If necessary, meet in working groups to complete the SWOT analysis.

Worksheet: Step 1

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Worksheet: Step 1

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Opportunities:

Threats:

Step 1 Example

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- Pre-college program identifies bright students who probably would not otherwise attend college; exposes them to college.
- New partnership with community college shows students the links among high school, college, careers.
- Recent improvements in end-of-year test scores.

Weaknesses:

- Mixed attitudes on the part of faculty about the importance of high standards for disadvantaged students.
- Many graduates of the feeder high school are unprepared for college work and must take remedial classes.
- The dropout rate at the feeder high school is over 10 percent.
- Minority students are under-represented in gatekeeper courses such as algebra, foreign languages, and advanced placement courses.

Step 1 Example

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Opportunities:

- Increasingly positive attitudes among area employers about the value of a postsecondary education.
- State school-to-work initiative provides grants, technical assistance.
- New national scholarship program will allow more students to attend college.

Threats:

- State funding for K-12 education may be cut.
- Changing demographics -- more students from poorly-educated families are coming into the area.
- Some in community believe guidance should be eliminated at elementary school level.

STEP 2: DESCRIBE THE CURRENT SITUATION

The process of prioritizing issues and describing the current situation answers the question: What needs to change?

Why:

- ✓ Turns SWOT analysis into a list of issues that the team wants to address.
- ✓ Describes needed changes in the current situation, making it easier to create usable and measurable goal statements.
- ✓ Provides the basis for data-driven change, which can be extremely powerful, particularly when the data points to severe areas of need.

How To:

→ Determine which issues emerging from the SWOT analysis are *priority* issues that must be addressed by the school. Ask each team member to select three to five issues (from any of the four areas) that they deem most important. Before making selections of top areas to address, consider the following questions:

1. Is this an issue that we **must** address or build on in order to move forward toward the goals of the CCCP?
2. Do we as a team have the potential to influence this issue?

Once people have made their selections, see if some issues can be combined. Settle on the top 8-10 issues that most need attention.

→ Turn priority issues into clear **statements of the current situation you want to change**, backed with descriptive and quantitative data

from the data analysis. These statements can be considered problem statements. It is possible that they will reflect strengths that you are hoping to build on. It is more likely, however, that they will reflect apparent weaknesses in the school.

→ Fill out the left side of the chart with Current Situation statements. Do this work on flip charts, using the format in Worksheet: Step 2 (See Step 2 Example).

Worksheet: Step 2

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS

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Worksheet: Step 2

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS
Academic Foundation • Pass rates in math are low, especially for girls who fail nearly twice as often as do boys. • 40% of all students, 10% of African-American students are in college prep courses. • 40% of high school juniors and seniors are in tech prep clusters, but there is no work-based component and only 45% of tech prep graduates go on to postsecondary training. • Achievement scores are below state averages; 65% of low-income students score in the lower two quartiles. • 5% of rising 8th graders do not make it to high school; among low-income youth, the dropout rate is 24%. • 50% of African-American high school seniors go on to postsecondary education; 80% of them require remedial education	

Worksheet: Step 2

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS
• African-American students account for 25% of suspensions although they make up only 13% of student enrollment. **<u>Academic and Career Guidance</u>** • Most counselors and teachers do not feel adequately prepared to assist students with career planning and college planning. • Curriculum assignments are determined by counselors based on grades and achievement scores. • 25% of families participate in annual parent/counselor conferences. • Linkages with employers are limited to an annual career fair and participation on the school improvement committee. • Collaboration with postsecondary schools is weak.	

Worksheet: Step 2

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS

STEP 3: CREATE A VISION OF THE FUTURE

A **vision** is an ideal image for the future of the school. It answers the question, What should we be aiming for?

Why:

- ✓ By creating a vision for the future, teams are forced to wrestle with their core values and beliefs around what they really want for their school.

- ✓ Having a condensed statement that describes a vision for the future can be used later as a powerful tool to market the team's plan.

- ✓ The process of visioning allows a team to stretch its thinking of what it is really trying to do. A planning process often results in looking at the situation in bits and pieces -- separate goals and strategies. The vision helps team members to think about what the sum of the parts would look like and to tap into their own excitement and sense of promise about the future.

- ✓ If it is done in a way that encourages creativity and fun, the visioning process can help build team cohesiveness.

How:

→ Based on your understanding of the current situation, come up with a vision that describes what the future will look like 10-15 years from now if your plan is successful, for students, the school, and the community. Create the vision in two forms:

1. a creative expression of the picture of the future the team would like to see -- through a collage, skit, drawing, song;
2. a vision **statement** in one or two written paragraphs.

Refer to Figure 3 for more thoughts on what makes a good vision. See also Step 3 Example.

FIGURE 3

HOW TO CREATE A COMPELLING VISION

To develop a vision statement, remember three types of vision: hindsight, foresight, and peripheral vision. **Hindsight** helps you to see the *traditions* and *values* of your school. Recall what ties the school together, what traditions make it special, and what behaviors and attitudes characterize the school at its best. **Foresight** helps you to see the world as it is expected to evolve, as you take into account your *hopes* for the future; to answer the question, "How would things be different if we lived out our highest and best values?" **Peripheral Vision** helps you to understand the world around you now, and helps you understand the *needs* in the school that need addressing.

Use the following process to develop your vision:

1. Clarify and define the core convictions that you want your school to live by in the future, for example:

- Equity: every child will receive the same quality education we would want for our own child.
- Excellence: we will hold ourselves and our students to the highest standards and provide support to meet the challenge of excellence.
- Inclusion: every child deserves access to the richest possible curriculum.
- Others

2. Then answer the questions: "What would our school be like if we lived by these values day in and day out? How would student outcomes be different? What would we be doing differently in order to produce these outcomes?"

3. Then use your answers to questions one and two to create a Vision Statement from this format:

- We believe that (list core convictions/values).
- Therefore, we will do these things (list the actions you envision).

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- And we will measure success by these student outcomes (list the outcomes you envision).

Drawn from Leaders by Warren Bennis and The Empowered Manager by Peter Block.

Step 3 Example

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

We believe . . .

- School should unlock and nurture students' dreams.
- All students deserve a rigorous curriculum and strong instruction and support to master that curriculum in order to reach their dreams.
- School should prepare all students for success in work, life, and continuing education.

Therefore, we will . . .

- Demand excellence of all staff and nurture excellence in all students.
- Give every student the same level of effort in teaching and guidance we would want our own children to receive.
- Help all students succeed in the gatekeeper courses of Algebra and Geometry.
- Help all students develop academic and career plans to realize their highest aspirations.
- Eliminate all unnecessary tracking and ability grouping.

So that students will . . .

- Feel themselves to be part of a nurturing community dedicated to helping them achieve their dreams.
- Meet the objective standards of excellence which we set for them and for our school.
- Improve the rate at which they go on to college by three to five percentage points each year.

STEP 4: SET GOALS

A **goal** is a statement that describes in realistic and measurable terms the desired future situation. Goals answer the question: what specific outcomes must we achieve?

Why:

- ✓ Goals are the component parts of a vision. By achieving them, you make your vision a reality.
- ✓ Goals define the future situation in specific, concrete, measurable terms.
- ✓ Goals provide motivating targets for the team to work toward.

How:

The goal setting process has two phases: (1) developing goals and (2) screening goals.

Phase 1: Developing Goals

→ For each current situation statement developed in Step 2, write a statement of what the desired future will look like at a point in the future (e.g., 3 years). These statements of the desired future situation are, in essence, goal statements. By writing statements of the desired future that correspond to the current situation statements, you will be setting out clear goals.

→ Fill out the right side of Worksheet: Step 2. Make for each goal a clear, measurable statement (See Step 4A example).

Step 4A Example

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS
Academic Foundation	**Academic Foundation**
• Pass rates in math are low, especially for girls who fail nearly twice as often as do boys.	• Girls will pass math at the same rate as boys, and overall pass rates will increase by 15 percentage points.
• 40% of all students, 10% of African-American students are in college prep courses.	• 50% of all seniors, 25% of African-American seniors will be on a college-bound "track".
• 40% of high school juniors and seniors are in tech prep clusters, but there is no work-based component and only 45% of tech prep graduates go on to postsecondary training.	• Tech prep will be a rich and challenging curriculum with both school-based and work-based components; 75% of tech prep graduates will continue their studies.
• Achievement scores are below state averages; 65% of low-income students score in the lower two quartiles.	• Achievement in math and language arts will be emphasized with scores on standardized tests equalling or surpassing state averages.
• 5% of rising 8th graders do not make it to high school; among low-income youth, the dropout rate is 24%.	• Middle and high school faculty will collaborate to reduce dropout rates to 2% for all 8th graders, 10% for low-income students.
• 50% of African-American high school seniors go on to postsecondary education; 80% of them require remedial education.	• 65% of African-American seniors will go on to postsecondary education; only 50% will require remedial education.

Step 4A Example

DEFINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION: GOALS
• African-American students account for 25% of suspensions although they make up only 13% of student enrollment.	• Alternatives to suspension will be used to reduce the total number of suspensions and to eliminate differences in rates by race.
Academic and Career Guidance	
• Most counselors and teachers do not feel adequately prepared to assist students with career planning and college planning.	• Faculty and counselors will be well informed about the local labor market and postsecondary opportunities and requirements.
• Curriculum assignments are determined by counselors based on grades and achievement scores.	• Curriculum assignments will be determined by collaborative process involving students, families, teachers, and counselors.
• 25% of families participate in annual parent/counselor conferences.	• 75% of families will participate in academic guidance activities.
• Linkages with employers are limited to an annual career fair and participation on the school improvement committee.	• Employers will be deeply involved in school planning and teaching activities and will interact frequently with students at school and in their work sites.
• Collaboration with postsecondary schools is weak.	• Close connections with in-state community colleges and 4-year institutions so that students are well-informed about their programs

Phase 2: Screening goals

→ Check your goals to determine whether they will ensure the most critically needed change by answering, for each, the following questions. (Note: Answers to these questions will be based as much on instinct as on hard facts, but it is important to go through this thought process at this stage.) Use the matrix in Worksheet: Step 4B. (See Step 4B Example.)

1. Vision: *Will achieving this goal move us toward our vision?*

2. Need: *Will achieving this goal move the school forward in improving education for our students?*

3. Impact: *Will achieving this goal impact fundamental aspects of educational achievement or access, as opposed to change at the margins?*

4. Equity: *Will achieving this goal redress inequities in access and achievement between majority/minority, affluent/disadvantaged, male/female groups in the school?*

5. Collaboration: *If we achieve this goal, are we likely to have built new collaborative relationships that will endure in our school?*

→ Look at your list of goals and narrow them to an achievable number. In addition to reflecting on the above questions, ask the feasibility question again: *Given who we are, the resources we have, and the time that we have, do we as a team have the potential to achieve this goal?* Consider eliminating those goals that fall short on the matrix in Worksheet: Step 4B or on this feasibility question.

Worksheet: Step 4B

SCREENING GOALS

GOALS	VISION	NEED	IMPACT	EQUITY	COLLABORATION

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Step 4b Example

SCREENING GOALS

GOALS	VISION	NEED	IMPACT	EQUITY	COLLABORATION
65% of African-American seniors will go on to postsecondary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Girls will reach parity with boys in math	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Active involvment of employers in school planning and teaching activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75% of families participate in guidance activities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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STEP 5: STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT

Strategies are the specific programs, projects, or efforts that schools or other institutions pursue to reach their goals. They answer the question: what approach will we take to reach the outcomes we set?

The process of strategy development has three phases: (1) force-field analysis, (2) research, and (3) strategy selection.

Phase 1: Force Field Analysis

Why:

- ✓ To illuminate a whole range of forces working in favor of or in resistance to change, including educational trends, the "politics" of a situation, organizational questions, personal time/abilities, and resources (financial and otherwise).

- ✓ To inform the discussion of strategy and action planning, so that plans are grounded in reality and are geared toward working with or around positive and negative forces thereby increasing the likelihood of success.

How:

- → First, ask each team member to spend some time alone writing down his or her list of positive and negative forces related to each goal. Forces are anything -- educational trends, organizational questions, personal time and/or abilities, resources -- that can help or obstruct progress toward the goal.

- → For each goal, brainstorm a list of forces, stating whether they are working in favor of the desired future, or working to maintain the status quo. Remember that one person's positive force can be another's negative force and that many forces will have both positive and negative elements. (Insist that each brainstormed item be at least four words, to provide enough specificity.) Draw arrows under each

force to indicate its direction -- toward change or supporting the status quo. Use Worksheet: Step 5A as a guide, but do this work on flip charts. (See Step 5A Example.)

→ Determine which forces are priorities to be addressed by asking the question: Which negative forces, if not addressed, will stand in the way of reaching our goals? Come to agreement on a limited number (6-8) of key forces per goal.

→ Repeat the process for other goals. Record your results on copies of the worksheet on the next page. Use the example that follows the worksheet as a model.

Worksheet: Step 5A

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION

Step 5A Example

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED FUTURE SITUATION
50% of African-American high school seniors go on to postsecondary education, and 80% of them require remedial education.	65% of African-American high school seniors will go on to postsecondary education, and only 50% will require remediation.

Many families fail to appreciate the importance of high academic achievement ←

The area has a culture of low educational expectations ←

Average new job in the future requires 14 years of education →

Students believe that existing jobs require few highly developed skills ←

School-to-work legislation and demonstration programs offer models to our region. →

National program of financial assistance for college will probably begin soon. →

Phase 2: Strategy Research

Why:

- ✓ Strategies themselves are the meat of the plan. If the planning process has, to some, not seemed "real," it will become real now.

- ✓ Too many schools do not take the time to learn from others about what has worked and what has not, leading to lots of reinventing the wheel as well as missed opportunities. This phase should enhance creativity and overcome the usual tendency to engage in narrow searches for solutions to problems.

How To:

Think Strategically

→ Develop a list of strategies that respond to the force-field analysis by analyzing its implications. What does the analysis tell you about the types of strategies that make most sense? For example, if you have identified that a barrier to achieving your goal is a lack of understanding or an information gap, you know that part of you strategy has to be about informing and educating people. If there are no programs in place to respond to the goal you have, a new program may be required. See Figure 4 for ideas on how to conceive of strategies so that they respond to the force-field analysis.

Brainstorm Ideas

Generate as many creative ideas as possible without evaluating them.

→ Combine strategy ideas that can be linked into a single strategy.

→ Determine what questions need to be answered about these strategy ideas if the group is to be able to select from among them.

Research Strategy Ideas

→ Assign research tasks to group members. People will need to read relevant reports and call organizations that can steer them in the direction of model efforts. As group members or staff to the group gather information on model strategies, Worksheet: *Step 5B may* provide a useful framework for that research and will ensure consistency of information on strategy ideas.

FIGURE 4

CONSIDERING STRATEGIC OPTIONS

PROBLEM IDENTIFIED BY FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS	STRATEGIC OPTION
Lack of understanding; information gap	*Inform, publicize, educate*
Apathy or resistance	*Mobilize people*
Program gap	*Develop new program*
Current program(s) inadequate	*Expand/improve existing programs*
No existing policy	*Develop new policy*
Existing policy inadequate	*Change or amend policy*
Other	*Other*

Worksheet: Step 5B

STRATEGY RESEARCH

Strategy Idea:

_____

1. Brief description of approach.

2. What types of communities have implemented it? How recently?

3. Who benefits? What have been the results?

4. Are there any aspects of the strategy that make it uniquely suitable or unsuitable to your situation?

5. What are the costs of this strategy likely to be, in the short term and in the long term?

6. What is the potential for sustaining this effort long-term?

Step 5B Example

STRATEGY RESEARCH

Strategy Idea: ___ Develop high school - community college partnership that will expose students to college and career options, with an emphasis on disadvantaged students.

1. Brief description of approach.

   Students at the high school will learn about college and career options through systemwide partnerships between the local community college and the school. Some events will include day-long tours of the college including classes, summer academic programs, and coordination of college and high school career counseling services.

2. What types of communities have implemented it? How recently?

   Trident Technical College in Charleston, SC and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Perkinston, MS have begun similar programs in the past three years. (Rancho Santa Fe Community College in Southern California has strong programs to bring teachers/faculty together from schools and colleges across disciplines to improve curricula. Might want to consider this too.)

3. What have been the results?

   Both colleges have seen an increase in enrollments of graduates of the partnering high schools, and these students are less likely to drop out of college. Most of these are first-generation college students. Faculty and administrators in high schools and colleges have forged working relationships.

4. Are there any aspects of the strategy that make it uniquely suitable or unsuitable to your situation?

   Currently, many high school students are not aware of the quality and affordability of community college programs. Others have not yet begun to think about their futures. Weak relationships with the college will require a major part of our strategy to be educational, relationship-building.

5. What is the cost of this approach likely to be?

- Incidental costs for visits to college.
- Release time for teachers and counselors initially -- cost of substitutes -- estimate 15 days total at $200/day = $3,000.
- Summer programs -- cost will depend on length/intensity. Costs include stipends for faculty, means for students, transportation. Range $5 - 10,000.

6. What is the potential for sustaining this effort long term?

Strong -- some costs could eventually be absorbed by institutions, others raised from community.

Phase 3: Strategy Selection

Why:

- ✓ Given the need for systemic change, coupled with scarce resources, the best strategies will be high-leverage. Determining which strategies are high-leverage requires weighing strategies against some key questions.

- ✓ It is important to select a reasonable number of strategies rather than setting out a long list of strategies that cannot be achieved.

- ✓ Ideally, the range of strategies that are developed will be a coherent, patterned set of policies and programs that will move you toward your goals and vision.

How:

→ Hold one or more meetings where strategy ideas are reported on, discussed further, and decided upon. Organize and group your strategy discussions around your specific goals.

→ Consider the leverage potential of each strategy. Address the following questions when discussing each strategy. Does it:

1. *capitalize on the school's strengths? the district's strengths?*
2. *build on opportunities?*
3. *attack the problem" upstream" (i.e., the cause rather than the symptom)?*
4. *focus more on prevention than the cure?*
5. *solve multiple problems at once?*
6. *provide a relatively big bang for the buck?*
7. *leverage other dollars or human resources?*

→ Review and finalize the list of strategies for each goal. By this point, you have gone through a series of steps to prioritize and select essential issues: After the data analysis; in goal-setting; and indirectly through the force-field analysis. You will want to be sure, still, that the chosen strategies meet the criteria of being feasible, responsive to the goals of the Vision to Action Forums and high-leverage.

It is also important to consider the list of strategies as a set. Ask yourself: *are there too many to be realistically accomplished? Or has the group not stretched enough -- are there too few or do they expect too little of the community*?

Do not settle on your strategy approaches until you have fully discussed these issues.

STEP 6: ANALYZE STAKEHOLDERS' INFLUENCE

Stakeholders are individuals, groups of people, or organizations with a direct stake in the outcomes you are seeking -- both the goals and the strategies. The stakeholders analysis answers the question: what political/institutional factors should we consider?

Why:

- ✓ Lays the groundwork for the necessary political or organizing activities required for success in implementing strategies.
- ✓ Allows for discussion and new insights into how strong or weak opposition or support really is.

How:

- → Using Worksheet: Step 6 for each strategy, brainstorm stakeholders relevant to that strategy. (See Step 6 Example.)
- → One by one, plot percentages of support/lack of support -- as you see the situation right now -- in each category of the Stakeholders Analysis matrix. You will need to estimate, but try to be realistic -- high numbers in the "make it" column are unlikely for a strategy that introduces new ways of doing things. If everyone wanted it to happen, it would have happened already! And if many of the stakeholders end up in the "stop it" category, you may want to refocus your energies away from that plan. But most stakeholders will end up somewhere in the middle. Your goal will be to tailor your strategies and action plans in such a way that you move each group of stakeholders to a more positive stance -- to positions further to the right on the Stakeholders Analysis matrix.

Worksheet: Step 6

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Strategy: _____

Group/Person	% Stop It	% Neutral	% Let It	% Help It	% Make It

Step 6 Example

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Strategy: Develop high-school - community college partnership to expose students to college and career options, with an emphasis on disadvantaged students.

Group/Person	% Stop It	% Neutral	% Let It	% Help It	% Make I
Chamber of commerce leadership				100%	
Large employers in low-wage businesses	5%	65%	20%	0%	10%
Community college leadership					100%
Community college instructors	5%	30%	25%	25%	15%
High school teachers				90%	10%
PTA		80%	10%	5%	5%

STEP 7: DEVELOPING A FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

A **funding plan** answers the questions: What will our strategies cost, and who will pay for them -- short-term and long-term?

Why:

- ✓ The CCCP hopes to leverage financial and nonfinancial resources, and your strategic plan should be developed with the "reality check" of considering how it will be paid for.
- ✓ Considering questions of how the initiatives you plan can be sustained at this point in the process can help you think strategically about possible long-term sources of support.

How To:

- → Determine which aspects of your strategies will have associated costs and how much they will be (e.g. costs for new programs, staff development, additional research such as surveys or site visits). Gather information from others who have implemented similar initiatives.
- → Consider possible sources of financial support. What can come from school sources, district sources, grant funds? Complete Worksheet Step 7.

Worksheet: Step 7

Funding Plan
1998-2000

Item	Sources of Support		
	School	District	Grant Funds, Other Sources
Program Costs			
Staff			
Training			
Materials			
Other			
Further Strategy Research			
Site Visits			
Surveys			
Item			
Item			
SubTotal			
Total			

Step 7 Example

Funding Plan
1998-2000

Item	Sources of Support		
	School	District	Grant Funds, Other Sources
Program Costs			
Staff	25%	25%	50%
Training		100%	
Materials	100%		
Other			
Further Strategy Research			
Site Visits		50%	50%
Surveys		100%	
Item			
Item			
SubTotal			
Total			

STEP 8: ACTION PLANNING

Action plans answer the question: who will do what, when?

Why:

- ✓ To create an overall game plan to guide the change effort that is rooted in an understanding of what makes sense strategically.
- ✓ To provide a step-by-step guide to who does what by when, so that there is clarity of responsibility.
- ✓ To avoid losing momentum as the team enters the implementation phase.

How To:

→ For each strategy, complete Worksheet: Step 8. Note that there are likely to be lots of "what"s for each strategy. Be sure that the action plan reflects the "political" needs, based on the Stakeholders Analysis. (See Step 8 Example.)

→ After an action plan has been completed for each strategy, look at the "sum of the parts." How will the team manage these action plans? Create a master plan for achieving all the activities that have been laid out.

→ In this plan, don't forget to answer the following questions:

- **Who will coordinate this effort?** *How will we all support that? How will we communicate with one another about our progress?*
- **How will we handle media and public relations for the plan?** *Whom do we want to contact? Who will be our spokespeople? What is a reasonable timeline for this?*

Worksheet: Step 8

PLAN OF ACTION

Strategy: _____

What	Who	When	How/Notes

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June 1997

Step 8 Example

PLAN OF ACTION

Strategy: Develop high school - community college partnership to expose students to college, career options, with an emphasis on disadvantaged students

What	Who	When	How/Notes
Brainstorm ideas for types of programs to include	CCCP team	June 1997	Plan on meetings for brainstorming and for follow-up.
Research other partnerships in similar communities.	Betty Chambers	Now through October 1997	Use success stories.
Develop outreach strategy to raise school interest in partnership.	Team: Tom King Betty Chambers Jim Smith	Summer 1997	Use examples from research in outreach strategy.
Organize meeting of faculty from college and school	Jim Smith	October 1997	Begin with individual meetings between college, each school.
Hold a joint meeting of high school and college guidance staffs	Team of key institutional partners	October 1997	Enlist their support in introducing plan to faculty.
Introduce plans to faculty	Team of key institutional partners	October - December 1997	Focus on other guidance counselors and lead teachers first.

STEP 9: PLAN AN EVALUATION

Evaluation of your efforts will occur after you have implemented strategies. **Evaluation planning** ensures that you have a process for evaluation in place in the front end. It answers the question: how will we know when we have achieved our goals?

Why:

- ✓ To lay groundwork for determining if you have achieved your goals, by setting benchmarks and determining how goals will be measured.
- ✓ To be able to learn from mistakes -- so that you can do it better next time.
- ✓ To be able to relate your successes to the community and to past and potential funders from a position of having hard numbers to back up your claims.

How To:

→ Using Worksheet: Step 9, answer the following questions for each goal:

- *When will we achieve the goal?*
- *How will we know when you have achieved it?*
- *Are there intermediate benchmarks we can shoot for?*
- *How will we measure whether we have achieved the goal?*
- *Who will carry out the measurement?*
- *Who on the team will carry out which parts of the evaluation?*

(See Step 9 Example.)

→ As you think about the question of how you will measure whether you have achieved the goal, consider a number of alternative forms of measurement. Brainstorm some here to be sure you are thinking of as many possibilities as you can. Then go back to the list and determine which approaches to measurement will give you what you want within reasonable time and cost parameters.

Worksheet: Step 9

EVALUATION PLANNING

Goal: _____

Indicators of Success	Baseline Year ____	Benchmarks			Measurement Tool	Who
		Year ____	Year ____	Year ____		

Step 9 Example

EVALUATION PLANNING

Goal: 65% of African-American high school students will attend college upon graduating; only 50% will require remedial education.

Indicators of Success	Baseline Year 1996	Benchmarks			Measurement Tool	Who
		Year 1997	Year 1998	Year 1999		
• Increased awareness of importance of secondary education, community college offerings among students.	about 50% aware	60%	70%	80%	• Informal survey of students	• teachers at each school
• Increase in high school student participation in college-run programs	about 100 students/yr	150	250	400	• College records	• Community outreach office
• Increase in enrollment at the community college	15%	25%	32%	45%	• College records	• Admissions office
• Increase in retention of high school graduates in college	about 50% overall	60%	65%	75%	• College records	• Registrar's office

CONCLUSION

Now that you have worked through the Vision to Action process, you probably feel like you know your school a lot better than you did before you started. Along the way, you've developed some important collaboration skills and started to understand how the team process works -- or else you never would have gotten this far. You're well on your way to making some important changes at your school.

But -- guess what? -- you're not through yet. You're going to be working with a lot of people who haven't gone through the Vision to Action process with your team and may not be in agreement about the strategies -- or even the goals -- that you've developed. They'll point out -- or become -- obstacles that you may have overlooked. You'll need to come back to the V to A process again and again, sometimes only revisiting one or two steps, sometimes working through the entire process as you incorporate new strategies and modify older ones.

Even if you don't have occasion to come back to the Vision to Action guide as you implement the first round of strategies, it's a good idea to keep it around, along with copies of your completed worksheets. It is the basis for ongoing evaluation planning to determine how well you met your goals and whether any new planning is needed.

But right now it's time to begin. With the data to back you up, your vision, your goals and strategies, your stakeholder analysis, and your implementation and evaluation plans, you're ready to take on the status quo. Only after you present your ideas and plans to a wider audience will you be able to refine them further.

Good Luck!

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June 1997

ALLIANCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT

DATA COLLECTION GUIDE
Middle School

Developed by

MDC, Inc.
Chapel Hill, NC

M-1 Middle School Enrollment, 1994-95

	Total Number	Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
6th grade			[1]								
8th grade											
Total School Enrollment											

M-2A Enrollment by Course, 1994-95, 6th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Language Arts		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%
Advanced				[2]								
Standard												
Remedial												
Mathematics		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												

[1] This percent equals male 6th graders divided by the total number of 6th graders (from M-1). It tells, "of all 6th graders, __% are male.

[2] This percent equals 6th-grade males in advanced language arts divided by total 6th-grade males taking language arts. It tells, "of all 6th-grade males taking language arts, __% are in advanced classes."

M-2B Number of Students Receiving a Passing Grade, 1994-95, 6th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Language Arts												
Advanced				[3]								
Standard												
Remedial												
Mathematics												
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												

[3] This percent equals 6th-grade males who passed advanced language arts divided by total 6th-grade males taking advanced language arts (from chart M-2A). It tells, "of all 6th-grade males taking advanced language arts, __% passed."

M-3A Enrollment by Course, 1994-95, 8th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Language Arts												
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												
Mathematics												
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												

M-3B Number of Students Receiving a Passing Grade, 1994-95, 8th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Language Arts												
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												
Mathematics												
Advanced												
Standard												
Remedial												

M-4A Performance on Standardized Tests, 1994-95, 6th Grade (Name of test _____)

	Total	Male	Female	White	African-American	Other
Percent in Top Quartile						
Percent in Second Quartile						
Percent in Third Quartile						
Percent in Bottom Quartile						
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

M-4B Performance on Standardized Tests, 1994-95, 8th Grade (Name of test _____)

	Total	Male	Female	White	African-American	Other
Percent in Top Quartile						
Percent in Second Quartile						
Percent in Third Quartile						
Percent in Bottom Quartile						
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

M-5A Student Failure, Suspension, and Expulsion Rates, 1994-95, 6th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Number failing one or more classes				[4]								
Number advancing to the next grade												
Number suspended one or more times												
Number expelled (long term suspension) one or more times												

[4] This percent equals 6th-grade males failing one or more classes divided by all 6th-grade males (from M-1). It tells, "of all 6th-grade males, __% failed one or more classes.

M-5B Student Failure, Suspension, and Transition to High School, 1994-95, 8th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Number failing one or more classes												
Number advancing to the next grade												
Number entering Alliance high school												
Number suspended one or more times												
Number expelled (long term suspension) one or more times												

M-6 How Many 8th-Graders Left School (spring 1995) Having Participated in Each of the Following Career Awareness Activities During their Middle School Career?

Number Participating in:	Total	
	#	%
Academic Classes Integrating Career-Related Lesson		
Career Awareness and Exploration Class		
Visitations to Worksites		
Job Shadowing		
Service Learning		
Career Interest Inventory Tests		
Individual Educational/Career Plan		
Summer Academic/Career Camp		
Other _____ _____		

ALLIANCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT

DATA COLLECTION GUIDE
High School

Developed by

MDC, Inc.
Chapel Hill, NC

May 1995

H-1 High School Enrollment, 1994-95

	Total Number	Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
9th grade			[1]								
12th grade											
Total School Enrollment											

H-2 Enrollment by Program, 1994-95, 9th Grade*

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
College Prep				[2]								
Tech Prep												
General Education												
Vocational												
Other												
Total		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%

* If your school uses different program titles, please write in changes.

---

[1] This percent equals male 9th-graders divided by all 9th-graders. It tells, "of all 9th-graders, __% are male."

[2] This percent equals 9th-grade males enrolled in college prep divided by all 9th-grade males (from chart H-1). It tells, "of all 9th-grade males, __% are enrolled in the college prep program."

H-3A Enrollment in Key Courses, 1994-95, 9th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Algebra				[3]								
Geometry												
Chemistry												
Biology												
Foreign Language												

H-3B Number of Students Who Received Passing Grades, 1994-95, 9th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Algebra				[4]								
Geometry												
Chemistry												
Biology												
Foreign Language												

[3] This percent equals 9th-grade males enrolled in algebra divided by all 9th-grade males (from H-1). It tells, "of all 9th-grade males, __% are enrolled in algebra."

[4] This percent equals 9th-grade males who passed algebra divided by all 9th-grade males enrolled in algebra (from H-3A). It tells, "of all 9th-grade males taking algebra, __% passed."

H-4 Enrollment by Program, 1994-95, 12th Grade*

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
College Prep												
Tech Prep												
General Education												
Vocational												
Other												
Total		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%

* If your school uses different program titles, please write in changes.

H-5 Completion of Key Courses (number of seniors who received a passing grade by the end of 12th Grade, June 1995)

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Algebra I				[5]								
Algebra II												
Geometry												
Pre-Calculus												
Calculus												
Chemistry												
Biology												
Physics												
AP English												
Foreign Language												

[5] This percent equals graduating males who passed Algebra I during their school career divided by the total male seniors (from H-1). It tells, "of all graduating males, __% have successfully completed Algebra I.

II-6 Postsecondary Enrollment, Class of 1994 (indicate data source: _____)

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Graduates		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%
Enrolled in 2-year college				[6]								
Enrolled in 4-year college												
Enrolled in Trade School or other non-degree program												
Employed/ Military Service												
Unknown												

[6] This percent equals males who enrolled in 2-year college divided by all males who graduated in 1994. It tells, "of all males who graduated in 1994, __% enrolled in 2-year college.

H-7 College Admissions Test-taking and Results, 1994-95

	Total #	Male #	Female #	White #	African-American #	Other #
SAT						
Number of Test-Takers						
Mean Verbal Score						
Mean Math Score						
ACT						
Number of Test-Takers						
Mean English Score						
Mean Math Score						
Mean Reading Score						
Mean Science Reasoning Score						

H-8 Student Failure, Suspension, and Expulsion, 1994-95, 9th Grade

	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Number failing one or more classes				[7]								
Number advancing to the next grade												
Number suspended one or more times												
Number expelled (long term suspension) one or more times												

[7] This percent equals the number of 9th-grade males who failed one or more classes divided by all 9th-grade males (from H-1). It tells, "of all 9th-grade males, __% failed one or more classes.

H-9 Persistence to High School Graduation (First-time 9th-graders who entered in September 1991)

Grade	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
First-time 9th-graders		[redacted]		[redacted]		[redacted]		[redacted]		[redacted]		[redacted]
Transferred (Enrolled Elsewhere)				[8]								
Left School (Did not enroll elsewhere)												
Graduated with Class												
Graduated Later												
Remain Enrolled												
Unknown												

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[8] This percent equals the number of "first-time male 9th-graders" who transferred out of the high school divided by all "first-time male 9th-graders." It tells, " of all males who entered the high school as first-time 9th-graders in September 1991, __% transferred to another school between 1991 and 1995."

H-10 How Many 12th-Graders Left School (Spring 1995) Having Participated in the Following Career Development Activities During their High School Career?

Number of students who participated in:	Total		Male		Female		White		African-American		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Job Shadowing				[9]								
Formal Mentoring												
Internships												
Development of Individual Education/ Career Plans												
College Visitations												
Community Service												
Youth Apprenticeship												
Worksite Visitations												
Other _____ _____												

[9] This percent equals males who participated in job shadowing divided by all 12th-grade males (from H-1). It tells, "of all male seniors at the high school, __% participated in job shadowing during their high school career.

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